

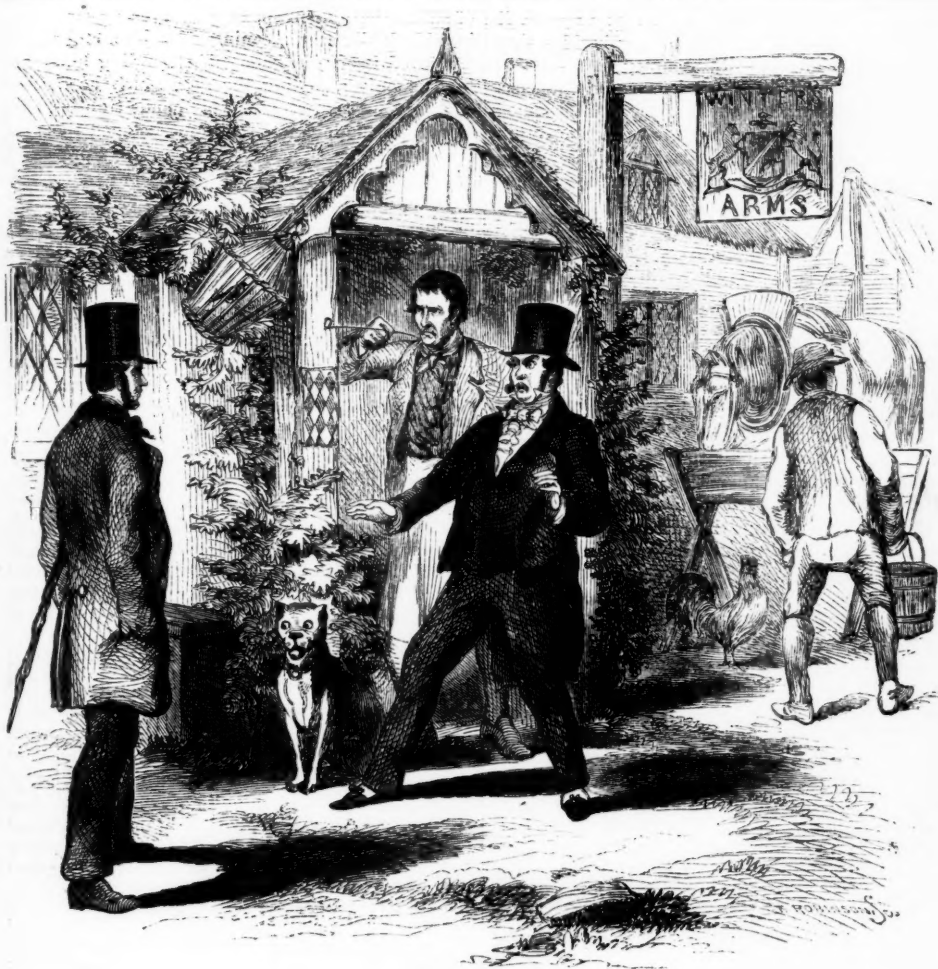
THE LEISURE HOUR

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SOFTLY'S SURPRISE.

TALE OF A DETECTIVE.

It was in the summer of 1845 that I was sent for, the following case explained to me, and the unravelling of it placed in my hands.

I had better, in the first place, premise that the names both of places and individuals are, purposely, fictitious: it were needless to wound afresh hearts which have already been well nigh broken by shame and sorrow.

No. 397. 1859.

"Mr. Clutch," said my superior officer, "I have sent for you, because I have greater confidence in your acuteness and ability than in that of any other officer in the force."

I bowed low to the compliment, though I am wrong to call it by that name, for the kind and warm-hearted man who was then one of our chief officers never paid empty compliments, but really meant what he said: I cannot let this opportunity

I I

slip of recording my deep obligations to Mr. Frankman for the unvarying kindness with which he treated me whilst I was under his command, and of thanking him most gratefully and cordially for the confidence he placed in me, and for the friendship with which he honoured me.

Mr. Frankman resumed.

"The case, as far as I understand it, is this: Mr. and Mrs. Winter, people of large fortune, living at a place in —shire called Northcourt, have had their house broken into, and have lost an immense amount of plate. I have not sent for you before, because, considering this affair merely in the light of a simple burglary, I hoped to be able to work it out without your assistance, knowing besides that your time was always fully occupied in trying to untie knots which had puzzled every one else. However, this Northcourt burglary has assumed that character now; our people have been ferreting and worrying about it for the last fortnight, and all to no purpose: and so now it legitimately belongs to you, if you will undertake it."

"Most readily, sir," I replied; "but I am afraid the scent must be rather cold."

"Yes, I am afraid so; but I don't like to give it up: the scent is not only cold, but gone altogether, it appears: however, you are the man to recover it, if it is to be recovered. You will do your best, I know."

Again thanking Mr. Frankman for his high opinion of my detective powers, and promising to do my best to deserve his approbation, I requested him to furnish me with all the particulars of this burglary, as far as he knew them.

Mr. Frankman referred to his reports, and gave me the following account of the robbery, which appeared to have been committed by very practical hands.

On the morning of the 15th of June, the under housemaid at Northcourt, upon going into the dining-room to open the shutters, discovered that some one had already performed that duty for her, though not exactly in the orthodox way. In fact, she found not only the shutters of one of the windows open, but a pane of glass missing. Plate glass though it was, it had been most scientifically removed; and as the pane was a large one, plenty of room for the admission of a man had been thus obtained. Upon this discovery, Sarah hastened up to the housekeeper's room, and after knocking till she was tired and receiving no answer, she opened the door and peeped timidly in. This was the girl's own statement. She called, "Mrs. Softly! Mrs. Softly!" but still no answer: the room was quite dark, except where the sun streamed through the chinks in the shutters, so that she could see nothing; but she thought she heard strange noises from the bed. Now, Mrs. Softly the housekeeper was married to Mr. Softly the butler, and Sarah's sense of propriety forbade her to enter their room uninvited; but the strange noise continuing from the bed, and she getting no answer to her repeated calls, she could stand it no longer, but rushing to the window she threw open the shutters, and the brilliant June sunbeams fell upon a scene which "frighted her almost out of her wits."

Mr. and Mrs. Softly lay side by side in bed, making uncouth sounds, and looking fearfully red in the face. In short, they were gagged, and bound hand and foot. Sarah speedily released them, and as soon as the butler could speak, he blubbered out, (for the poor man actually cried in his vexation,) "The plate-chest—the—villains, the key—oh! the villains!"

The house was of course soon thoroughly aroused, and Mr. Winter made acquainted with what had happened.

The butler's account was as follows. He was suddenly awakened out of a sound sleep by a sense of suffocation; upon opening his eyes, he saw a man in a black silk mask leaning over him, and busily employed in, as he believed, strangling him; but he was only adjusting the gag, which he quickly effected; he then strapped his hands tightly to his sides, tied his legs together, and fastened them securely to the bed-post, which effectually prevented him from attempting to get up. He was surprised, he said, not to hear a word from his wife during all this time, and was afraid at first that the man might have murdered her; but he was soon relieved on that score by the appearance of another masked figure on the other side of the bed, who had performed towards Mrs. Softly the same office that had been so effectually performed on him.

As soon as the two men had so fastened the butler and his wife as to insure their silence, they began to search the room; Mr. Softly's eyes followed them in the greatest alarm, for he began to guess their errand, he said; and his fears were very shortly verified. One of the men took a bunch of keys out of Mr. Softly's breeches pocket; he looked at the butler as he did so, and laughed, as much as to say, "I see by your face that I'm on the right tack:" he soon found the object of his search—the key of the plate-chest; another look at the butler, and another low laugh, showed his knowledge of the value of the prize he had gained.

The men immediately left the room, merely shutting the door after them; and Mr. Softly, half strangled and powerless, was left to the full enjoyment of a knowledge of the intended robbery, without being able to do anything either by word or deed to prevent it. He described his sensations to have been at that time quite overpowering. "To think," he said, "that all that beautiful plate was being took away by them villains, before my very face almost!" And then the loss to his poor dear master! he couldn't bear to think of that. In short, he was in a dreadful state of mind, by all accounts, and blamed himself for sleeping with his door unlocked. Had it been locked, the villains would probably have awoke him in breaking it open, and the burglary might have been prevented; nay, it should have been prevented, unless they had taken his life; for Mr. Softly would not have yielded up the key of his plate-chest except with his life. The burglars had made a clean sweep of it. Plate to the value of £2000 and upwards had been carried off, and amongst the rest were several racing and coursing cups, which had been in the family a long time, and were highly valued by Mr. Winter.

Suspicion fell upon a man of the name of John

Post. He had been formerly, and not very long since, under-footman at Northcourt, but had not given satisfaction to Mr. Softly, who complained of his carelessness and idle habits, and he was consequently dismissed. This man had been taken up upon suspicion, had been examined, and discharged. His apprehension was owing in a great measure, if not entirely, to the hints and innuendoes of Mr. Softly; but when Post was under examination, it was mainly the evidence of Mr. Softly which exculpated him; and it was remarked upon, as a proof of the butler's conscientiousness, that although he was evidently no friend to Post, still he would not allow his dislike to influence him.

Since the discharge of John Post, no one had been apprehended even on suspicion; no clue to the depredators could be discovered; the affair was wrapped apparently in an impenetrable mystery.

The history of the Softlys was this. He had originally been footman in Mr. Winter's family, then under-butler, and eventually had been raised to the dignity of butler, in which capacity he had acted for the last fifteen years: altogether, he had been about five-and-twenty years in Mr. Winter's service. As soon as he was appointed butler, he made known his wish to marry Mrs. Winter's maid, to whom, he said, he had been attached for several years. The housekeeper was about to leave, and Softly, in obtaining his master's permission to marry, obtained also the situation of housekeeper for his wife. Mr. and Mrs. Winter were kind-hearted, easy-going people, who possessed the not uncommon dislike to trouble which characterizes our aristocracy; and, moreover, they liked both Softly and Ann Cook, both of whom they had every reason to consider trustworthy and honest. Ann Cook, though not so long in the family as Softly, had been lady's maid more than five years, and had therefore been over fifteen years at Northcourt at the time of the burglary.

Having received all the information on the subject that Mr. Frankman was able to afford me, I took my leave. I must confess that I never felt less sanguine as to the result of any search in which I had been employed, than I did in this. It is true that I already suspected two people; but how was I to get at them? There is, I am sure, an inward expositor or revealer of secrets, as well as an inward monitor in man; I have over and over again entertained a perfect and entire belief in the guilt and innocence of particular people; a belief founded upon no grounds that I could at all explain, substantiated by no proof whatever; and yet it has been as strongly impressed upon my mind as though I were well assured of the fact by positive evidence; and what is more extraordinary still, my suspicions, impressions, belief, or whatever the feeling may be called, almost always turned out to be true. Now, in this instance I had, almost from the very first mention of the man's name, felt an irresistible conviction that Softly the butler was implicated in the burglary at Northcourt. No matter how improbable it seemed, I thought so all the same; I couldn't help it. It could not be that I was prejudiced against the man, since I had never heard his name before in my life. In vain did I say to myself,

"This Softly has been upwards of twenty-five years in Mr. Winter's family; he is an old, respected, and valued servant." In vain I said this; the ready answer was in my heart, "Ah, he had a hand in the robbery, for all that."

I tried to reason and argue myself out of this suspicion at first, but at length I gave in to it. But how was I to act? As I said before, how was I to get to the people I suspected? It was quite clear that their master did not suspect them, though I did; and I knew from experience that it was ticklish work interfering between master and servant—as bad as between man and wife, pretty nearly. However much a man may abuse his own servants, he never likes any one else to abuse them. I once had a lesson with regard to interfering about a gentleman's drunken coachman, that I did not readily forget.

And now I was about to tax another gentleman's servant with a worse crime a good deal than drunkenness—with robbery—a robbery, too, committed under the most aggravating circumstances of guilt, involving a breach of trust of the most flagrant description. And moreover, in this instance, the man's master, so far from ever having himself spoken ill of his servant, had the highest opinion of his trustfulness and integrity, and invariably spoke of him in the highest terms. Besides all this, I had not a tittle of evidence to disprove his right to his master's confidence—nothing but my bare suspicions—the morbid effect of a naturally suspicious nature, I suppose. It was thus I argued as I walked home after my interview with Mr. Frankman. Reason and common sense seemed both against my conclusions, but they were not shaken a bit. I continued obstinately to accuse the Softlys in my mind, though I "pooh-poohed" the idea with my lips.

"Well!" thought I, "at all events I must do something." It was still early in the day, about eleven o'clock; I should just be in time for the 11.30 train; so I hailed a cab, jumped in, and told the man to go to the — station as fast as he could.

Northcourt was about fifty miles from London, and the station at which I was to get down (which we will call Gravelly) was barely a mile from the house. Arriving at Gravelly, I immediately started on foot for Mr. Winter's residence; it was a sultry afternoon, and I walked slowly, endeavouring to form some plan of proceeding, but I could hit upon nothing. I could inspect the premises and ask questions; but all this had been done already, and to no purpose. So on I walked, pondering and racking my brain for an idea, and in that state of uncertainty I arrived at Northcourt. "I will trust to accident," I said to myself as I rang the bell. I wanted, if possible, to see Mr. Winter before the butler had seen me, though I scarcely knew why; for certainly I had no intention of commencing my campaign by denouncing Softly to his master. The door was opened by a footman in a smart livery.

"Is Mr. Winter at home?" I asked.

"He is in the stable yard, sir, but he will be in presently," replied the man.

"Mr. Softly, he is in, I suppose?" I don't know

why I said that; because I hoped he was not, I believe.

"Oh yes, he is in;" and then he added, as though my inquiring for Softly had put it into his head, which, no doubt, it had, "You are come about the butler's place, sir, I suppose." Here was the chance, here was "the accident;" and I was not slow in taking advantage of it.

"Oh! here is master!" said the footman.

I turned round, and saw a tall, thin, elderly man, coming towards me.

I touched my hat, and explained my business, that is, my new business, to him. He told me to follow him into his study, and began to catechise me as to my last place, my character, recommendations, etc., when I stopped him, telling him that I had not come in reality to look for the situation of butler in his family, but that I was an officer in the detective force, sent down from London to endeavour, if possible, to discover the authors of the late robbery at his house. I further told him that the moment the footman had asked me the question about the butler's place, it had occurred to me that it might be useful to assume that character; and if, therefore, Mr. Winter thought good, I would take up my residence at Northcourt for a short time, in the capacity of butler; but I insisted on one thing, namely, entire secrecy as to my true character. I assured him that if a breath of suspicion was raised as to that, my plan would be defeated. After some little demur on his part, he agreed, though he said he did not expect any good result from my sojourn in his house. I saw very clearly that he did not relish the implied suspicion of some one in the house, to which my plan very plainly pointed. Indeed, he asked me point-blank if I suspected any of the servants; I replied that I had no actual grounds of suspicion against any one, but that, all other means having failed, I should like to put this scheme of mine into practice as a last resource, though I candidly acknowledged that I was not myself very sanguine of success.

A man, however rich he may be, does not give up £2000 worth of plate without a struggle, especially when great part of it is old family plate, that could not be replaced; Mr. Winter therefore agreed to my plan; I was to be taken upon trial; Softly was to leave in a fortnight; and as this was my first situation as butler, having hitherto acted only in the humbler capacity of footman, I was to come at once, that I might learn some of the duties of my new profession under the careful guidance of Mr. Softly.

Before leaving, I was introduced both to the butler and the housekeeper. They received me very kindly, Softly especially so: he said he was glad his master had engaged me; he had no doubt I should do very well; it was a very easy place; and, for his part, he should be delighted to put me up to any little peculiarity of his master's; more than that he was certain I should not require: I knew my business well enough, he was sure. Why he was, it would be difficult to say; but, however, he was very civil, and moreover exactly the sort of person I expected to find him. He was about fifty years old, short, stout, of a florid com-

plexion, with thin, light, sandy sort of hair, very bald, and with a pair of restless grey eyes, which were never quiet for a moment. To say that he never looked me in the face would not be strictly true: he very frequently did, when I was not looking at him; but he never met my eye if he could help it; the instant I observed him, he *snatched* his eyes from my face, as it were, to come back again when the coast was clear.

Mrs. Softly was a little woman, somewhat prim and starched in her manner; she had fewer characteristics than her husband, and was probably, I settled, entirely under his control.

I was to return to London that evening for my clothes, and to come back to Northcourt, to enter upon the duties of my new situation, on the morrow.

It had been agreed between Mr. Winter and me that I should take the name of Hunt, with whom he had been in correspondence, and had just decided not to take; but this determination Softly did not know, whilst he *did* know of the correspondence. The object of this arrangement was that no suspicion might be raised in his mind on account of my very sudden engagement. I expressed to Mr. Winter my surprise at hearing that Softly was leaving him: so old and valued a servant, I said, would be a great loss to him, I feared. He said he would indeed, but that he could not think of standing in the way of his advancement in life: he (Softly) had taken a violent fancy into his head, that he could make his fortune in Australia, and consequently to Australia he was going; he did not think Mrs. Softly much fancied the plan, but she had been talked over, he supposed, by her husband, and he hoped they would succeed, for they were a worthy couple, and had served him and Mrs. Winter faithfully for many years.

"How long," I asked, "has this Australian scheme been on foot, Mr. Winter?"

"Oh! for some months—it must be six months, and more than that, since Softly first spoke to me about it. Poor fellow," he added, "he was nearly giving it up when that robbery occurred; he offered to do so if I wished it; he said he would stay here, and serve me for nothing, till the loss of the plate was made good, if he lived as long; indeed, he said more than that—he actually offered to give me £1500 which he had saved, he and his wife, during their service, towards repaying the loss of the plate, for which he always blamed himself, though quite needlessly, I think. Of course I did not listen to either of his proposals; but they tell well for the man's feelings—poor Softly!"

I made no comment, and shortly after my interview with Softly and his wife, I took my leave, declining Mr. Winter's kind offer of sending me to the station in his dog-cart.

I wanted to be quite alone for an hour or two; so, after I had walked about half the distance to the station, I turned off the road into a wood, and, selecting a shady spot, under a fine old beech, I laid down at full length, to cool myself, and to think over my future proceedings. In this comfortable situation, after the heat and dust of the road, I not unnaturally fell asleep: I must have

slept for some time, for when I awoke, the sun was getting low, and the trees were casting long shadows over the opposite slope. I was just looking at my watch, to see if I was in time for the 7.30 up train from Gravelly, when I heard footsteps approaching; presently the sound of a man's voice came distinctly on my ear; I started, for I knew the voice instantly: it was Softly's; some one answered him: there were two there, but I did not recognise the second voice. A path ran through the wood, near to the old beech under which I was lying, and along this path the two men were walking. I could not see them, the bushes were too thick, but as they came nearer, I could hear what they said plain enough: they were strolling leisurely along.

"What sort of fellow does he look like?" said the stranger.

"Oh, nothing particular—a good sort of a young man enough, I dare say," replied Softly.

"And the squire has engaged him, has he?"

"Yes, as good as engaged him: he is to come to-morrow on trial; he is to be placed under my instructions; I am to teach him his duty."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the stranger, "no one better able; but is he a sharp fellow, likely to suspect anything, or to pry about, and meddle with matters in which he has no concern?"

"Not he, he will never set the Thames on fire; he seems a good-humoured, easy-going young man, as I said before; but there's not much in him—I saw that at once."

"Ah, well, all right, then—don't want—lurking—my house——"

And that was all I could hear; they had passed by too far for me to catch another syllable, though I listened with all my ears, for I was very anxious to hear what more they had to say.

I dared not attempt to follow them, as I should certainly have been heard, in forcing my way through the bushes. I was therefore obliged to content myself with what I had got, and that, though apparently very little, I considered a good deal, for it confirmed my suspicions of the butler. It was quite evident that he had something to conceal, and it did not require a conjuror to discover what that something was.

But the fellow's impudence! I have not much in me, haven't I?—a soft easy-going sort of a chap, eh?—capital!—and I chuckled to myself as I walked towards the station.

Thinks I to myself, thinks I, "I'll make you dance to another tune, Master Softly, before we part, or I'm much mistaken: not much in me, eh?"

The fact is, I was rather nettled, I suspect, at old Softly's mean opinion of me, though I didn't own it.

I was in plenty of time for the 7.30 P.M. train to London, where I arrived in due time.

The next day, I packed up my things, and started back for Gravelly; there I found a dog-cart waiting to convey me and my portmanteau to Northcourt. I got there just as the servants were going to dinner. I accordingly joined them, and after dinner adjourned to the housekeeper's room to discuss divers good things, only allowed to upper

servants. I will not break faith, and betray those whose salt I have eaten; but I strongly suspect that masters and mistresses have very little idea of the exceedingly small difference which often exists between the eating and drinking of the housekeeper's room and the dining room.

I found the Softlys as agreeable and condescending as people in their high position could be towards a tyro like myself; they imagined this to be my first introduction, as an inmate, to "the room," and consequently expected me to be rather overawed by the grandeur of the furniture, and the superior elegance of their own manners and behaviour, over the frequenters of my natural sphere, the servants' hall. It was very amusing. I frequently sought occasion to talk with Softly about the late robbery, although never allowing him to suppose that I was more interested in the affair than as a piece of gossip. If he seemed inclined to enter into it, which at first he was not, I listened attentively; if, on the contrary, he tried to shirk the subject, I always allowed him to do so, nay, helped him, so fearful was I of raising his suspicions.

Softly had one great fault. He was too fond of the bottle. I never saw him drunk; I don't believe any one ever did; but I saw him muddled very frequently during the fortnight I was at Northcourt. I could not for some time make out how it was he got muddled, for he drank very little at dinner, and very little in "the room," and he was scarcely ever in the pantry by himself; when he had done his work, he always came into the housekeeper's room, and sat there; he liked the company of the ladies, he used gallantly to say.

At length I discovered that Softly, in his afternoon walks, invariably looked in at "The Winter Arms," a public in the village, kept by a man of the name of Soak. This same Soak held but an indifferent character in the neighbourhood; he had formerly been under-gamekeeper to Mr. Winter, but had been dismissed upon suspicion of selling the game—a suspicion which, I was told, amounted in point of fact to certainty. He was a married man, and had a large family, and Mr. Winter, who was the kindest-hearted and most credulous man I ever saw, pitying his destitute condition, and relying on his promises of amendment, allowed him to take "The Winter Arms," lending him a sum of money to begin with.

About a week after my arrival at Northcourt, I was sent into the village with a message from Mrs. Winter, when, just as I was passing "The Winter Arms," out bolted Softly in my very face, and immediately behind him stood a dark, tall, ill-looking man, with whom he had evidently just parted.

Softly turned very red at first, but quickly recovering himself, said to the man in the doorway, "You'll be sure to send those things up as soon as they arrive."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Softly, you shall have 'em directly they come, depend upon that." I started—I had heard that voice before—but when? I could not call to mind that I had ever seen the man, but his voice I was perfectly certain I had heard.

Softly explained to me that he had been speak-

ing to Soak about a barrel of beer, or porter, or something that ought to have been left at his house by somebody—the carrier, or the railway man; but the fact was, I didn't hear, or at least take in, a word he said: there was a confused murmuring in my ear all the time he was talking, but what it was I had no idea. I was thinking, the whole time, where it was I had heard that man's voice—it was so strange that I could not recognise his face!

At length it struck me all of a sudden. "I have it!" I cried in my excitement. "You have it! what is it you have?" said Softly, in the greatest astonishment. I saw my imprudence, and for an instant I was quite abroad; I didn't know what to say. Luckily for me, Softly was not so great a conjuror as he fancied himself. By an adroit turn of the conversation, his attention was diverted to another topic.

Softly was not naturally a sharp fellow, but the consciousness of danger had engendered suspicion.

We parted at the stable-yard gate; he said he must go in, as he had something to attend to, but there was no occasion for me to come in unless I chose.

[To be continued.]

THE HOME OF WATERTON THE NATURALIST.

SOME years ago it was our fortune to pay a visit to the residence of the singular and eccentric naturalist, Waterton, near Wakefield. The mansion lay embosomed in a romantic valley, with wood, water, shrubbery, garden, forest, drawbridge, all in keeping, but not in mediæval style. Everything was on a superb scale. As the owner was rich, and a humourist withal, he had indulged his taste without stint, and in contempt of expense. We were a party of four, driven in a single carriage from the town of Wakefield to the seat of the distinguished humourist and naturalist.

One of our party was a lady who shall be nameless, a tall figure, very formal and fastidious, rejoicing in the circumstance of her being granddaughter of a duke. It might have been enough for me to be privately informed of this, as I was by our hostess; but the descendant of a duke never for a moment suffered us to forget the interesting fact. We were reminded of it in every observation she condescended to make, each new landscape or stately dwelling that came into view, and in every topic of conversation, however remote. If one had not been compelled to smile at the vanity of boasting in a circumstance that could have constituted no merit of hers, one must have been amazed at her ingenuity in continually tagging on to every theme the reference to a ducal descent. Always it was, "The duke said this, or would have said this, or did that." We could have gently hinted to her, in Hibernian phrase, that those who are always boasting of their ancestors are like a potato, the best part under ground; but, of course, our politeness repressed the remark. It was a lady, and we gallantly bore the infliction, till, after a drive of

about an hour and a half, we were nearing the end of our short journey.

The residence of the naturalist at once recalled to us our boyish pictures of the region in which Imlac, prince of Abyssinia, and his pupil were secluded from the world. In approaching the mansion we crossed a drawbridge thrown over a moat, filled with clear blue sparkling water. The mansion was not turreted, nor Elizabethan, nor of any style of the antique; but it had a look of simple elegance, and its prevailing expression was neatness and comfort. Our carriage wheels creaked along the gravel walks, and soon we were ushered into a stately apartment, having one immense window in the side, with no mullions nor divisions, but, as it seemed, one vast sheet of unbroken glass—the glass so transparent, and so complete the illusion, that you appeared still to be in the open air, with the roof and sides of a magnificent pavilion suspended over you. Only by going up and touching could you be convinced that a solid wall of demarcation separated you from the outer air. The effect was peculiar and very pleasing. The owner meant to surprise his visitors, and he attained his object. We have never before nor since seen so large a pane of glass, and we fear to commit ourselves to guess the number of square feet it must have contained, lest we should resemble the French lady who drew upon her fancy when her memory failed. A telescope in a brass stand stood on a table in the centre of the apartment, by which you were able to sweep every part of the landscape; not the least interesting point of view being that in which you could distinctly see through the telescope the herons and their young ones among the trees some three miles off, at the other extremity of the lake. Far as the eye could range was the property of Waterton. That lake was a sweet piece of water, and the house was built upon an island formed by the moat that joined the lake, and bounded by the drawbridge. The owner's appropriate ambition as a naturalist was to assemble the greatest possible variety of vegetable and animal productions. Rare plants and singular living creatures here found a home with one who well understood their nature and habits. You looked around you on all sides, and you found a most tasteful mixture of wood and water, forest and sward, wild and cultivated; here, nature running riot, and there, art adorning nature: and the whole was circumscribed within this valley, hills, feathered to the tops, bounding your view. There was excellent taste in selecting and decorating such a spot. It was one from which, indeed, evil passions could not be shut out, with all their baneful and baleful progeny of agony, and woe, and wretchedness; but it was also a place surely in which, unless it were the tenant's own fault, much happiness might be tasted in company with competence, health, and a good conscience.

With so much to captivate the eye and the fancy, we were very eager to be introduced to the possessor of all these delights. We had not long to wait. But, as frequently happens, my own anticipations were entirely set at naught by the reality. The actual Waterton did not at all correspond to the imaginary one that I had built up in my own fancy.

If you would not break the charm which favourite living authors have flung around you, it may be as well, perhaps, not to pay them a personal visit. There is something in this that sounds malicious, but its general truth must excuse it. As "love throws its halo round the dear one's head," so fancy clothes our favourite poets, speakers, and authors in a splendid garb, which a personal acquaintance transforms into an ordinary dress. It is even well if the golden image is not turned to one of clay. We met Waterton with highly raised expectations, extending even to his outer man, and therefore we deserved to suffer some disappointment.

The fortunate owner of all these rich grounds and all this charming scenery, as we said, soon presented himself. He was attired in a grey coat, very ill made, or at least ill fitting. Blue inexpressibles, with vest of no particular cut, shoes thick and clumsy, stockings of blue, with a coloured neckerchief put carelessly round the throat, and a shocking bad hat, completed the habiliments. We thought at the time that the entire garniture, if put up for sale at a public auction, might probably have fetched about three and fourpence, including the seedy hat at one extremity, and the heavy shoes at the other. Yet we were standing in the presence of a man of ample fortune, cultivated taste, literary acquirements, and literary fame, owner of this charming retirement, and master of all he surveyed. In person, he was of middle height, wiry and rather slender, with features unprepossessing, restless grey eye, and hair iron grey; he had a clear, ringing, telling voice, and great vivacity of manner. We knew that he was a Roman Catholic; but that made no difference to us on the occasion of our visit.

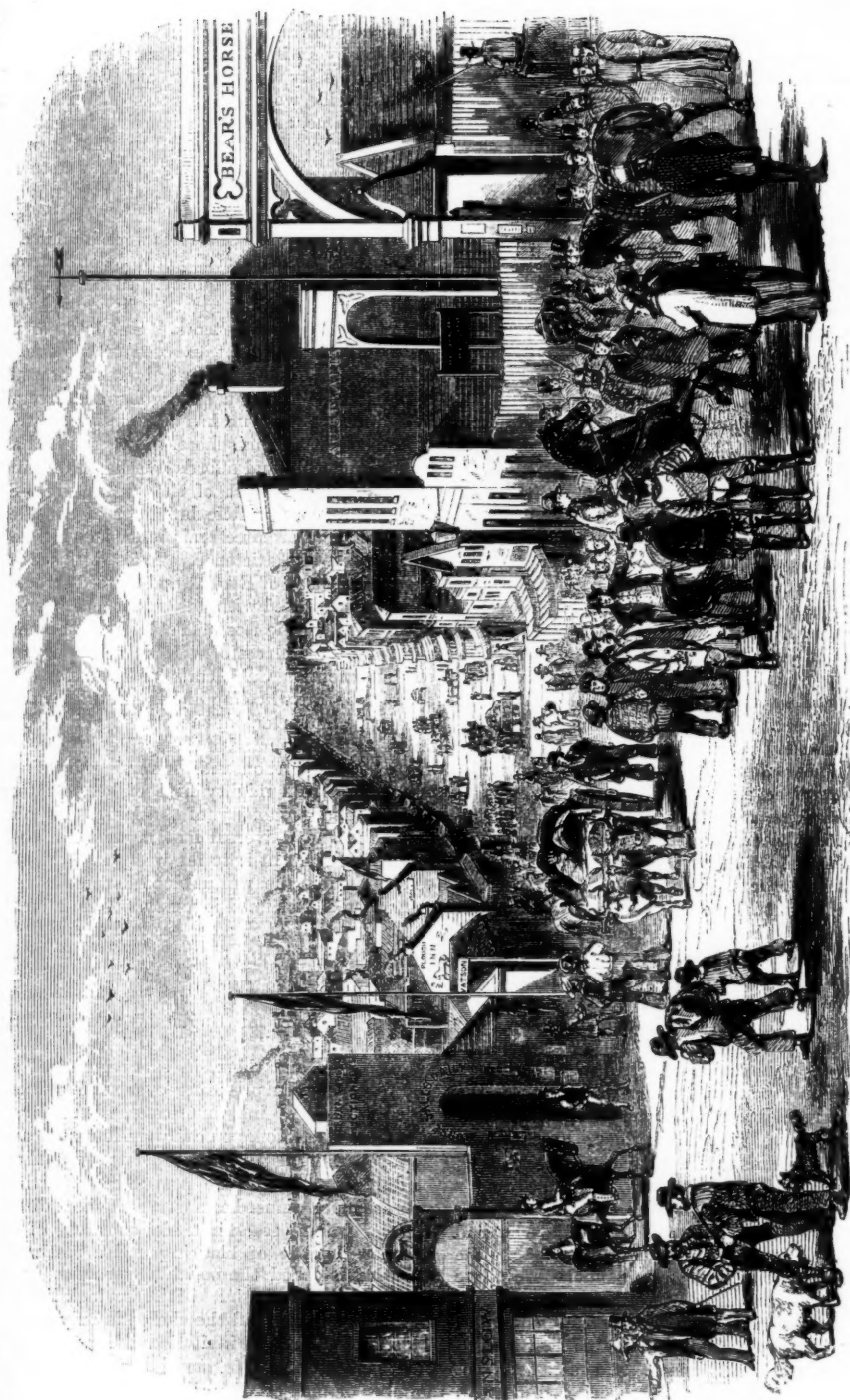
Living a lonely bachelor life, he was particularly polite to the ladies. Full of anecdote, he was a graphic describer, and we felt that in conversation we had the same man that appears in his books. The burden of his talk, on the occasion of our visit, was the history of a recent encounter he had sustained with poachers. We were even shown the weapons of destruction employed on that redoubted occasion. Shots had been discharged, and, aided by two of his men-servants, he had pressed hard on the retreating foe, without, however, that we remember, having taken any prisoners. Great affluence of beautiful and tasteful sculptures bedecked the mansion, both inside and without. One in particular, by Canova, we admired, which had cost several hundred pounds. Altogether, this was the sumptuous residence of a literary prince. Here he might enjoy rural life in all its glory; here were all the requisite means and appliances—contentment, friendship, ease, and alternate labour; literary occupation, books, and troops of friends; no wish ungratified, no item omitted, except that he had not been wise enough to set up an Eve to twine the roses and make the garden smile. We drove back, strangely impressed with the courtesy, singularity, and vivacity, the great conversational power, and varied literary attainments of this far-travelled and rather celebrated man; and satisfied, not merely to have heard by the hearing of the ear, but to have actually seen, Waterton the naturalist and owner of the Happy Valley.

MELBOURNE.

WE find the following lively picture of Melbourne in the "Cape of Good Hope Argus." It is interesting as showing in what light the one colony is regarded by an inhabitant of another:—

Within sixty hours after our departure from Port Adelaide, we dropped anchor off Williamstown. I lost no time, as you may imagine, in getting up to Melbourne. How changed to what it was five years ago! Then everything was in a state of disorder and confusion. The streets were not paved. The roads were quagmires. Houses were scarce. Rents were enormous. Prices were fabulous. Extortion was the order of the day. Comfort was not to be had for love or money. Men, women, and children were huddled together in squalid wretchedness in dirty canvas tents. Hundreds of people were, night after night, exposed to the drenching rain, homeless and shelterless; but now, how altered is the scene! From a struggling and irregularly built town, Melbourne has become the metropolis of the southern hemisphere. Its growth has become wonderful, and affords another illustration of the colonising powers of the great Anglo-Saxon race. Shops and public buildings of considerable splendour and architectural pretensions have everywhere risen into existence. The streets are as well flagged as those of Regent and Oxford-streets, and are as well lighted with gas, which has been introduced into the houses of Parliament, the theatres and the hotels, places of worship, and many private establishments. Cabs, carts, and vehicles of every description, are wheeling hither and thither through every vein and artery of the bustling city. Collins-street puts you in mind of Cheapside. There people are to be seen in thousands, humming, buzzing, and swarming like a mighty hive of bees. After the dulness and monotony of Adelaide, this air and animation and universal motion was to me what a refreshing draught is to the weary and thirsty traveller. I felt the warm blood dance through my veins, and I exclaimed joyously, "I am alive."

The mail for England closes to-day, and the post-office is besieged by throngs. Melbourne is hot with excitement. Boys of all sorts, sizes, and colours ply their noisy crafts of "runners;" and cries of "Sum'ry for England," "Argus, Argus," "Herald, Herald," "Age, Age," resound on all sides. Here and there, in every principal street, you discover men presiding over small tables provided with pens, ink, and paper, where, for a nominal consideration, you can write letters or address newspapers with perfect confidence that they will be duly forwarded to the post-office. Further on, you are much amused to observe, at short distances, fellows whose stock-in-trade consists of three brushes, a bottle of blacking, and a resting-block for what is called the polishing process. "Want your boots cleaned, sir? Make 'em look like patent leather in a minit, and the charge is only sixpence." This is the style of invitation the passer-by constantly receives and frequently accepts. From the number of men enrolled in the shoe-black brigade, I should imagine the trade to be a very thriving one.



MELBOURNE, VICTORIA.

What a place this Melbourne is for meeting old friends! Within the last two hours I have been hailed by men from London, Mauritius, South Africa, Adelaide, and elsewhere. How hearty is the shake of the hand! How absolutely English you feel! Melbourne is a great loadstone. It attracts people from every part of the globe. "Come along, old fellow," says an old friend; "I have not seen you for years; let us have some tiffin at the Criterion." We get to this hotel at half-past one, p.m. The dining-room is very large; a fountain is playing in its centre, three hundred people are feeding, the fare is varied and excellent, the wines A 1, and the attendance unexceptionable. I am delighted with it. What a decent lot of fellows they seem! How well they dress, how fast they talk, how fresh and healthy they look! What a contrast to the men one meets in Adelaide! There was one thing that tickled my fancy not a little. It was the manner in which each man squared his account. I have always been accustomed on these occasions to say, "Waiter, what is to pay?" But at the Criterion such a question could only be asked by a very, very "new chum." The old hands know what they have had, and see by the programme what the figure is. You will notice them take out half-a-crown or five shillings, as the case may be, place it on the counter, and walk out without saying a word. The conductor of the establishment says that it answers people's purpose to be honest when they are properly dealt with, and instead of sustaining a loss by the system, he has been a great gainer, because the time saved is equal to the wages of a dozen waiters. Under such circumstances, the man must indeed be a rogue who would take any undue advantage of the confidence reposed in him.

Amongst the various public buildings I visited during my brief stay in Melbourne, none pleased me better than the Public Library. This is worthy of the capital of Victoria. It stands at the top of Swanston-street, on the left-hand side, and when the *façade* is finished, will have a most imposing appearance. You enter a large hall, supported by Corinthian columns and paved with tessellated marble. You ascend a fine broad staircase, and are in the library, a really splendid apartment, diffused with that soft and studious light which ground glass so beautifully affords. The arrangement of the books, 8000 in number, is excellent. You can get at what you want in a minute. The books are all bound in calf and gold, and are of the best and latest editions. The accommodation is very superior; in fact, a nobleman's library would not furnish you with better. I was quite enchanted with the place. I visited it several times, and on no occasion saw less than fifty or sixty persons present. To the honour of the Legislature, be it said, they voted £5000 for books last year, and another £5000 for the same purpose this year, besides which the munificent sum of £20,000 has been granted for adding another wing to the structure. This is legislating in a national spirit, and will well repay the large outlay which has been made. The average attendance at the library, which is open free of charge to the public from ten o'clock

in the morning till nine o'clock in the evening, is two hundred daily. The selection of books, which is admirable, is intrusted to Mr. Bernard, the colonial agent in England. They are supplied by Mr. J. J. Guillemin, of Chester-square, and delivered free in Melbourne at London prices.

I paid a visit to both houses of Parliament, the exterior of which was not completed. The decorations of the interior are very gorgeous, but too theatrical to please me. This remark applies especially to the Legislative Council, which bears a greater resemblance to a temple of arts than to a deliberative assembly. Even in golden Victoria I was quite unprepared for such a display of costly splendour. When all is finished, the outlay will not fall very far short of a million sterling.

The suburbs of Melbourne, such as Collingwood, Richmond, and St. Kilda, have more than kept pace with the progress of the city. Some of the villas, and many of the terraces that stud these favourite places of resort, would not discredit any of the suburbs of London. The railways are in full play to various parts of the country; and the punctuality with which the trains start from the stations is not surpassed in any part of the world. This adds greatly to the convenience of the dwellers out of town. In a few years the "iron horse" may be expected to be seen travelling over every part of this plucky and go-ahead colony. Some people shrug their shoulders and think the place is much too fast, and prophesy all sorts of misfortunes as the penalty of colonial extravagance. But I share in none of these doleful predictions. I have faith in the development of the resources of the country, and in the indomitable energy and perseverance of the people. The constant infusion of new and first-rate blood is doing great things for Victoria.

SOMETHING ABOUT POSTAGE STAMPS.

We confess to harbouring something like a tender affection for those little parallelogrammic portraits of Her Majesty in red, which, costing us only a penny each, yet frank our letters to any part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. A packet of them in the corner of one's *porte-monnaie*, even though that handy receptacle should contain little else, always has a welcome look, not so much for the trifling pecuniary value they represent, as from the really marvellous power they consign to their possessor. A single one of them guarantees you the despatch of a missive for a distance of five hundred miles, if you like, with the speed of the carrier pigeon and the punctuality of clockwork; and will thus perform for its owner a feat which would cost him twenty pounds or so to execute in person, and which, had he existed a century ago, he could not have accomplished with a mine of wealth.

Personally, our regard for the penny postage stamp owes something to certain memories of the times when no such things were to be had—when a letter from home cost tenpence on delivery by the postman—and correspondence, which is the dearest solace of absence and separation, had to be

restricted by considerations of economy. In those days we remember that while Parliament was sitting, and tenpences were rather scarce with us, because employment was difficult to obtain, we used to haunt the lobby of the old House of Commons, and intercept the members as they came up the stairs, in order to solicit the favour of a frank. The first of them whom we found courage to address was a tall, round, ruddy-faced man, with an eye that used to laugh and sparkle, and a mouth that smiled habitually, with a touch of sarcasm about it, and who wore a light buff-coloured suit and a white hat. "Come along," said he, "I'll give you a frank, and two if you like." He led the way into that little closet that used to stand open at the left of the door-keeper's, and wrote, in a firm legible hand, the name of William Cobbett.

We got a little enlightenment on the subject of franks before long. People who had a good share of assurance, it seemed, rarely paid postage for anything, but got everything franked. They did not wait till their letters were written, but bought blank half-sheets, which they folded as envelopes, and got them endorsed by the members, dozens at a time. We used to wonder at their consciences, especially as some of them, to save themselves trouble, would leave a packet of envelopes with some seedy loungee of the lobby, and give him a small gratuity for getting the whole of them franked. To be sure, what a number of autographs some of the good-natured old gentlemen would make before the claimants would allow them to pass on to their places in the senate. We cannot remember a single instance of refusal, certainly never encountered one ourselves; the reason may have been that all the claimants were supposed to be constituents, whom it would not have been policy to refuse a favour which cost but a stroke of the pen. Rumour said that most of the franks were made use of by the ladies: how that may have been we do not know; but certainly one met with far more ladies in the lobby then, than it is customary to see there now.

The Penny Post, and the appearance of the miniature Queen's head, put an end to the begging of franks from members of Parliament. Even Government servants now use the red stamps on their letters, with the exception (though perhaps that is not the sole exception) of the members of the Cabinet, who have a round red stamp of their own, bearing the word "Paid," and no Queen's head.

When the Penny Postage system was first resolved on, the authorities issued a prospectus, offering a reward of £500 for the best design and plan for a stamp. The conditions, which were widely circulated, stated that the chief desiderata were simplicity and facility in working, combined with such precautions as should prove effectual against forgery. It is said that upwards of a thousand different designs and plans were sent in; but it does not appear that any one of the competitors tendered anything so simple as the stamp which was eventually chosen. It is likely that the precautions recommended against forgery—and which it was

not foreseen would be unnecessary—led to a complexity in the plans, which was found, on consideration, incompatible with their adoption. About the same time, a prize was offered for the best design for an envelope, which was gained by Mr. Mulready, R.A., and was tolerably familiar to the public, by whom it was, however, far from being generally used.

Let us now look at a sheet of penny postage stamps, and, in default of any professional or official knowledge, of which we cannot boast, see if we may not extract from it its own tale. The Queen's head, delicately engraved, is relieved by a dark back-ground formed of finest lines, resembling, on a very minute scale, those traced by the engine-turner on the back of a gold watch. On either side of the head rises a narrow slip of carved trellis-work. In the two upper corners are a couple of square studs, with the word "Postage" between them; and at the two lower corners are two white hollow squares, each containing a letter of the alphabet. But in a sheet of 240 stamps there are no two of them found which have the same letters, but the whole sheet contains such changes as may be made by the use of two alphabets—the changes being regularly made thus: BA, BB, BC, etc.; DA, DB, DC, and so on to the last letter. This change of the letters it is which is supposed to constitute the check to the forger; but there has never been, and probably never will be, an instance of the forgery of postage stamps. The reason, it cannot be doubted, is that there is not sufficient inducement to the crime; or, in other words, it would not pay. Stamps cannot be passed like notes; and though they do often circulate as representatives of coin, it is generally in small amounts, and for the most part among persons known to each other: it would be no easy matter to get quantities of them exchanged for cash. Moreover, the forger would have not only to engrave his punch or die, and cast his blocks, but to make his own paper; for, on looking at the back of the sheet, you will see that every one of the Queen's heads falls on a regal crown, impressed in the water-mark of the paper in the process of manufacture. And, lastly, he would have to compound his own ink—the ink with which postage stamps are printed differing from all other printer's ink, not only in its hue, which is nearer rose-coloured than vermilion, but in being soluble in water, which is not the case with ordinary printer's ink.

Looking closely at the Queen's heads, you will see, on comparing them severally with each other, that all are evidently struck from a single die, and each block is therefore a fac-simile of every one of the others. This is evident from the situation of the diminutive white specks which are scattered over the whole surface, and appear between the carved crossings of the trellis-work at the sides. If separate punches had been engraved and used, there *must* have been some small deviations in the position of these infinitesimal dots, but there are none. What is remarkable about the printing, is the sharpness and clearness of the head and back-ground, looking to the fineness of the lines and the diminutive spaces between them. We gather

from this fact, that not only is the material of the blocks of the highest quality, but that the blocks themselves are subjected only to a limited number of impressions, and, when that number is worked, are replaced by new ones.

But what is the number of Penny Postage stamps annually in demand? Has the reader formed any notion about that? If not, he may be startled to hear that at the present moment the demand is little short of 500,000,000 in the year. Supposing the year to contain 300 working days, that would give, for every working day, about 1,600,000 stamps to be manufactured. Something, that, for the printer to do. No very impossible task, however, when we remember the small size of the stamp, and the number that might be printed by a single stroke of the press, or one revolution of a cylinder machine.

After the printing comes the process of gelatinizing the back or unprinted side of the sheet, to render the stamps adhesive. How this is accomplished in practice we cannot say; whether the sheet is drawn beneath brushes fed with the fluid gelatine, or whether the latter is laid on by hand; but the business is obviously too simple to present any great difficulty.

Very different is the next and finishing process. This consists in puncturing the interstices between the several stamps on the sheet with innumerable small holes, in order that, without being at the trouble of using knife or scissors, the user may tear the stamps asunder in a moment. That this process comes last we conclude from the fact that, on holding a sheet of stamps up to the light, the gelatine glaze is never seen covering even one of the minute holes. Another seeming proof of the same thing is the fact that the cross net-work of holes is never found precisely in the place where it should be: instead of occupying the white intervals between the stamps, it encroaches upon the stamps themselves, cutting away a part of their sides, or devouring a part of the words at top or bottom. The operation is, however, performed well enough for all practical purposes; though it is well not to rely too freely on its efficacy, and to tear your stamps with a deliberate hand. Four thousand pounds was paid to the inventor of this drilling ceremony—a very large reward for what seems at first view a very inconsiderable service. The task, however, was more difficult than it looks: the numerous holes are not mere punctures such as a printer might make with a series of small points, but are, on the contrary, complete circles, from which the small discs of paper have been cut cleanly out. The grand difficulty to contend with must have been the extremely narrow space between the stamps; had there been a wide margin, the printer's joiner could have supplied the means of partially dis severing the stamps in the act of printing, without having recourse to an additional process.

Let us glance now at the possible destiny of a postage stamp, and see what may be in reserve for one of these little Queen's heads. From the printer it has found its way to the Stamp Office, and thence it has migrated to the shop of the stationer or the

district postmaster. There it may lie in a drawer or figure in the window for weeks, or it may be torn from the sheet to-morrow, and consigned to the pocket-book of the private customer. It is by no means certain that it will leave its owner's custody on the special mission for which it came into the world, for it may pass through the post once and again as the representative of small change—in payment of newspaper subscriptions—in discharge of a trifling debt—on an errand of charity—or as a substitute for pocket money to an absent child. The advertising columns of a newspaper will show us fifty other functions which the penny postage stamp is made to perform. "Send seven postage stamps," says one, "and in return you will receive a (German) silver spoon," a sample, of course, of an elegant service of cheap plate, which the advertiser wants to recommend. "Send a dozen stamps," says another, "with a specimen of your hand-writing, and I will disclose to you the mysteries of your own mind and temper, and put you in a position to make the most of the faculties you possess, and to guard most effectually against the temptations that beset you." A third benefactor inquires if you are in want of money, and kindly adds, that you have only to send him a few Queen's heads, when, in return, you will receive a secret, the possession of which will put you in funds for the remainder of your life. A fourth, in return for thirteen of them, will remit you an infallible recipe, which he professes to have won by the sad experience of years of personal suffering, for the cure of nervous disorders, hypochondria, indigestion, and a long train of ills besides. Of all which professions, however, you need not be too credulous, seeing that the stamps, once out of your possession, will not come back again, and that which does come in their place is not likely, to say the best of it, to prove a monument of your prudence and discrimination.

Such are some of the incidental functions of a postage stamp, and the list need not close here: we have seen the Queen's heads pass instead of coppers, when the copper coin ran low—over the counter in shops—to book a parcel at the receiving house—and even, sometimes, to pay an omnibus fare. But the destiny of all stamps, at last, is to be stuck, like a limpet on a rock, on the envelope of a letter; and now it is that its travels in the world are sure to begin in right earnest. Its outset, however, is not very complimentary to its royal countenance, for the first salutation it meets with, on making its *début* in active life, after being fished out of the receiving-box by the district postmaster, is a violent blow in the face from an inky die, which smudges its rose-coloured beauty with a couple of huge blotty figures, and annihilates its comeliness for ever. Then it gets a ride in the postmaster's wallet to the chief office of the district, where it is pitched and tossed about hither and thither under the hands of the sorters, with a celerity that gives to the whole ceremony the aspect of some reckless frolicking game, and finally gets packed in a parcel, and tossed into a bag along with hundreds of others which have shared the sport. In the bag it rattles at a headlong pace, in

a red box mounted on high wheels, helter-skelter along a mile or two of bustling streets, until it arrives at the railway station just as the mail train is ready to start. It is no sooner bundled into the mail van than the start takes place, and off it rolls on its mission—say to some small village in Northumberland. All night it goes thundering along the iron road, and just as the dawn is glimmering in the east, it finds itself suddenly jerked out of the window of the carriage, with its companions, without the train stopping for an instant, and caught in the arms of a man in a red jacket, who was standing alone on the silent and solitary platform, on the look-out for it. The man is the village postmaster, who, having secured his charge, walks off with it to his humble cottage, and, unpacking the letters, begins to arrange them in the order of their delivery—having accomplished which, he sets out about seven o'clock upon his round.

But our Queen's head happens to be affixed to a letter which is directed "to be left till called for," and, beyond the name of the Northumbrian village, bears no other address. So the postman, knowing nothing of the owner, follows his usual course of proceeding in such a case, and sticks the letter, with the address outwards, into the casement of his little office, that if any friend of the person to whom it is addressed should pass that way and happen to see it, the news of its arrival may reach him. In wild, out-of-the-way places, letters thus exhibited are known to remain in the postmaster's possession weeks and even months together. Perhaps the correspondent is a farm servant, who, having changed his employer and moved to a distant spot, has no time to spare to look after letters; or, he may be a navy, in course of continuous migration from one place to another, whose letters are few and far between, and, if they reach him at all, reach him by devious and uncertain routes. But there is an end, sooner or later, to the delays and circumbulations even of such a letter as this, and it reaches its destination and falls into the owner's hand at last. And now, you will say, there is an end to the career of the little Queen's head.

Perhaps there is; but also, perhaps there is not. It is true that hundreds of millions of postage stamps are annually destroyed, and meet with the fate of waste paper; but the whims of a certain class of people, who like to exercise their industry on trifles, have decreed that vast numbers of stamps shall be rescued from the ordinary fate that awaits them, and be appropriated to a useful, if it may be so called, or a quasi-ornamental purpose. As there are collectors of almost everything old under the sun—from old pots and pans, old metals, old stores, and old anything—so also are there collectors of old postage stamps. This odd sort of antiquaries beg old stamps wherever they go, and amass them by hundreds of thousands, for some cherished purpose of their own, on the accomplishment of which they have set their hearts. Now it is to line a work-box or a trunk, or the interior of a closet or a cabinet; and sometimes their ambition takes a still higher flight than this, and their

grand design is to paper a room with the defaced Queen's heads. This has indeed been done by persevering people, and that in more instances than most persons are aware of, and is, we have reason to believe, continually in process of completion in various parts of the country. It is said that a room thus papered, when the affair is managed with skill, and the walls cleverly varnished afterwards, has a very agreeable aspect—the walls appearing to retire considerably from their actual position, and thus giving the effect of larger space in the apartment. This result is due partly to the minuteness of the pattern, and partly to the complete blending of the red, black, and white hues, and to the fact that they have lost their positive colour by the unavoidable wear and tear of their previous career.

So the stamp on the letter of our unknown Northumbrian may chance to get into the hands of a collector, and continue its existence as a permanent fixture, after its day of locomotion is gone. In this case there is no knowing how long it may continue to show a face to the world: the entire living generation may pass away and leave it still fixed to the wall, an infinitesimal fraction of a monument of industry and pertinacity which might, perhaps, have been much better applied.

The reader may now, if he pleases, consider that we have used up the postage stamp, and have nothing further to say about it.

RAMBLES IN BRITTANY.

I HAD been strongly dissuaded from making my proposed excursion to Brittany, by friends who professed to have an accurate knowledge of the country; but, having long been a traveller, and having often been misled by those who care not to deviate from the hackneyed route, I preferred following the bent of my inclinations. In the end, I felt glad I had so determined, as all my anticipations of pleasure were fully realized.

It would be difficult to imagine anything more widely differing from the account I received of Brittany than the realities I met with. Not that I mean to attack the accuracy of my friends. They had talked of tracts of barren heath; of land producing nothing but broom, (in French, *genet*, from whom our race of Plantagenets derived their name and crest,) gorse, and other plants of a similar description; of wild and bleak coasts, without any grandeur of feature to vary the sameness; whereas, I found wooded dells and secluded valleys; rivers, whose banks were adorned with scenes of great and varied loveliness; mountain torrents, dashing along their stony beds, or pent up in the deep pools of some lone water-mills, looking as if they had been untouched for centuries. These were Nature's beauties; nor were those of Art less attractive. I met with quaint and antique buildings of rich dark-coloured oak, the projecting stories resting on carved brackets of grey granite; churches, of which the simplicity of some, and the elaborate architecture of others, excited interest; and many a ruined castle, with its

ancient avenue, its round turrets, its conical roof, recalling the days of chivalry. The thickly-wooded banks surrounding the different small properties gave a peculiarly picturesque aspect to the country; pollarded oaks, elms, and ash, assuming every sort of grotesque form, so completely closed each separate view, that the spectator was kept in a constant state of excitement, wondering what fresh scene of varied beauty would next meet the eye.

The Bretons are reckoned amongst the least civilized of the French people; their language is very similar to the dialect spoken in Cornwall and South Wales; so much so, that the respective inhabitants of these countries can understand each other. To me there was a great interest even in their rude simplicity; their unaltered language, dress, manners, and mode of life, all seemed to take one back to those days of intimate connection between Great Britain and Little Britain, as this part of France was formerly called. It has been said by those who have made the deepest researches into the subject, that *Armorica*—another name by which Brittany was known—was colonized by natives from Britain, after the sixth century; and, from reference to all the oldest notices of the colonists, it would appear that their descendants have scarcely made any change in their costume, dialect, or manners. Many of the men are still wrapped up in goat-skins, while others wear the long flowing hair, the broad-brimmed hats, and the trunk hose, which the pictures in Froissart have rendered so familiar. The Bretons are short in stature, and possess no comeliness of feature. The women are better looking than the men, and their head-dresses are most singular, some of them having the form of an inverted coal-scuttle, towering high in front, while a species of deep cape attached to it falls down over the back. Many of these head-dresses are made of the finest lace, which has been handed down as a most precious heirloom from generation to generation.

Nothing can exceed the patient endurance and undaunted courage of the men. The French navy is chiefly manned from the Breton peasantry, as in that profession these qualities are most valuable. The women are a most industrious, hard-working race, very superstitious, very credulous, and dearly loving the innumerable legends, stories, and ballads which tradition has handed down from one generation to another. These legends form all the amusement of the long winter evenings, when all the family being assembled round the blazing hearth, the old grandame, or perhaps some travelling pedlar, will recite, in a monotonous chant, the marvellous tales of the days of old. The wilder the story and the more exciting the incidents, the greater the pleasure of the audience.

In agriculture, the Bretons have made but little progress, as they cling to all their old-fashioned proceedings with a tenacity that nothing can shake. One of the prettiest sights to be seen in connection with a Breton farm, is the thrashing out the corn. They have no barns, and they will not stack their corn as we do; therefore it must be all thrashed out in August. The thrashing grounds are adjacent

to the farm, and consist merely of hard earthen floors swept clean; there the whole family assemble, and from daybreak till eventide they may be seen hard at work, turning the flail and singing merrily, to lighten the labour, while the children keep off the poultry and pigs. On a bright glowing day in August, nothing can be more picturesque than the scene thus presented; and I have sat under the shade of some neighbouring walnut tree hour after hour, watching the proceedings, and gladly partaking of the homely fare, consisting of cider and buckwheat cakes, with delicious honey, which is offered with such earnest and cordial hospitality.

I embarked on board a friend's yacht at St. Helier's, Jersey, and proceeded thence to St. Malo. The voyage was delightful, the weather being everything we could desire—one of those brilliant days in early autumn, uniting the warmth and brightness of summer with the clear atmosphere and the exhilarating breezes of spring. So pleasant was the sensation, as the yacht glided swiftly along the calm sea, that I felt quite sorry when we landed at St. Malo, on the coast of Brittany. It was my intention to proceed from that port to Dinan, thence to Rennes and Vannes, and to make an excursion from the last-named place to the famed antiquities of Carnac. Thus I should accomplish my wish of seeing parts of the country not generally frequented by travellers, and of visiting many of those primitive spots so full of interest to the lover of the olden time. I would advise any one who wishes to become acquainted with this part of France, to follow the above route. It is so seldom taken by strangers, that none of the charm of novelty or of primitive simplicity, either in the country or the inhabitants, is yet worn off.

St. Malo does not possess much to attract the traveller bent on more interesting objects. Its situation is somewhat curious, as it stands on an island, connected with the mainland by a long causeway, known by the name of "*Le Sillon*." The town is built upon a very limited or contracted space, which rendered it necessary to carry the buildings close to the water's edge; and the effect of the walls and towers rising immediately out of the sea give a very picturesque air to the place. The want of room has also caused the houses to be carried up to an enormous height, while such a narrow space is left between the rows of buildings that it is impossible to dignify these filthy lanes by the name of streets. There is a curious inscription carved on one of the old towers of the castle, built by Anne of Brittany, to this effect:—"Let who will grumble, thus it will be, it is my pleasure;" referring, it is supposed, to the heavy tax levied for the erection of the castle.

The celebrated Chateaubriand was born at St. Malo, in the Rue des Juifs, No. 15; the house is now an hotel, but the room is still shown, and from its windows his tomb may be seen. Jacques Carter, the discoverer of Canada, was also born at this port.

I only remained long enough at St. Malo to make the necessary inquiries for my further progress; and I was not sorry to turn my back upon the town, for I do not think I ever was in so dirty

a place as the hotel, and this was felt the more sensibly, coming as it did in immediate contrast with the excellent hotels both at Southampton and St. Helier's.

From St. Malo I determined to go by steam to Dinan: luckily it was high tide, when the voyage up the river Rance is very agreeable; the passenger is taken through some of the loveliest country of its kind that I ever saw, and it was peculiarly delightful, seen on such a day, with all the additional effect given by the glowing brightness of autumnal colouring, which in that country of orchards and vineyards exceeds one's powers of description. The gorgeous tints of the vine leaves, golden, crimson, and vermillion, when glowing in the beams of a brilliant sun, could only be done justice to by the painter's art; and the picturesque old orchards, with their abundant produce of rosy apples and pears of every varied hue that can be imagined, from a delicate green to deepest gold, add greatly to the almost magical beauty of the scene.

We passed on our route many charming villages, where, had time permitted, I would gladly have remained for days. I was much struck by the pretty secluded situation of St. Suliac, and the quaint costumes and primitive aspect of the peasantry. It was like being transported to another world, for I saw no one except the simple dwellers in these retired hamlets, from whence we took up many passengers, who were going to dispose of their rural merchandise at the different marts in the neighbourhood.

No one can have any idea of what good pears or mulberries really are, who has not tasted them, as I did, freshly gathered from those sunny orchards, and arranged with such attractive gracefulness, in the prettiest shaped baskets, all freshly trimmed with vine leaves of the brightest hues. My readers may fancy the deep purple mulberries, the russet, or soft green pears, peeping forth from their brilliant covering, their melting coolness and unrivalled flavour far surpassing those grown in England, or those which, having been imported, have lost their freshness by the sea voyage.

The vineyards are allowed to grow more luxuriantly in Brittany than in other vine countries. The foliage conceals the poles which support the vines, and around which they twine. This adds to their beauty, but I believe lessens their productiveness, as they waste their strength in throwing out the long graceful shoots I so much admired.

The situation of Dinan is very striking; it stands on a rocky eminence, and its numerous spires and antiquated towers add much to the highly picturesque effect of the town, as seen from a distance. There is no doubt that the country around Dinan is by far the loveliest in Brittany. A narrow valley runs at the foot of a rock, on which the town is partly built, and which is so steep that some of the streets carried down its sides are so nearly perpendicular as to be inaccessible to any but foot passengers, and even they are obliged, in very slippery weather, to seek the aid of stout staffs pointed with iron, for fear

the downward impetus should prove too strong for them. And yet the approach to the town from St. Malo is by the steepest of these curious streets—its name is the Rue de St. Jersuel—and the old curious gateway is worthy the attention of the admirers of such old-world relics.

To the admirers of that chivalrous hero, Bertrand du Guesclin, the cathedral will prove interesting, as it contains a curious memorial of him. It is a slab of dark-coloured marble, on which is sculptured, in *basso relievo*, an eagle with two heads and outspread wings, across which a bar is drawn, with a quaint inscription on it in gold letters, stating that the heart of Gueaguin (the old way of spelling his name) reposes beneath, while his body lies at St. Denis, in the sepulchre of the French kings. Formerly the body of his wife, the Lady Tiphaine, rested beside the heart of her lord. These remains no longer exist, having been removed and scattered to the winds in the days of the Revolution, when few things honoured or respected escaped the destroyer's hand.

Nothing, in my opinion, can be more charmingly picturesque than the streets of this curious town. Almost every house has fine old pillars in front, supporting richly carved balconies, which are not only highly ornamental, but in the heavy rains, so frequently occurring, they afford the passenger effectual shelter from the pelting of the pitiless shower.

The country around Dinan is so richly varied that expeditions to different interesting spots may be made almost without end. The walk to the wooded heights, on which the ancient castle is situated, is one of the most delightful. As early as the year 1167 this castle was taken by our Henry. The view is not only striking from the lovely country that lies spread out beneath, far as the eye can see, but also very curious, as it reveals the singular feature of the country—that dense labyrinth of lanes which intersect it in every direction. From the soft yielding nature of the soil, these lanes soon become so deep that they resemble deep ditches, with a narrow path at the bottom of their precipitous banks. The luxuriant and varied vegetation adorning these lofty hedges, converted each simple lane into a verdant and most lovely garden, even at the season when I visited that country: what they must be in the spring, with all the exquisite wild flowers, that are so plentiful in that neighbourhood, I must leave to the imagination of my readers.

The vast number of these singular paths renders it difficult for a stranger to find his way, as they cut it up in every direction. Any one who has wandered about the country during many a long delightful day, as I have done, will easily comprehend how really determined men, with the advantages of position it affords, might have withstood any force that could have been brought against them, and have acquired for themselves the lasting fame which must ever belong to the brave Chouans and Vendéans. I would advise any one, who may be induced to follow in my steps, to take the road to Rennes, leading through Hédè, as the view from the ruins of the castle is most lovely, and there is

a small chapel not far distant, called Montmuran, where, at the commencement of his brilliant career, Bertrand du Guesclin received the accolade, and was invested with knightly armour for the first time.

Of the town of Rennes little need be said; its aspect is so completely modern, owing to the destructive fire by which it was laid waste in 1720, that there is no inducement to linger there longer than will suffice to visit the Palais de Justice, a stately edifice, where formerly the states of Brittany held their parliaments. Many rare manuscripts are carefully treasured up in the public library. One is a most curious document, being a grant of lands in Spain to Du Guesclin, from Don Henry of Trastamare.

[To be continued.]

ROGERS' RECOLLECTIONS OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

A LITTLE volume of recollections, supplementary to the "Table Talk" of Samuel Rogers, has been published from the manuscripts left in the hands of the poet's executors. Fox, Burke, Grattan, Porson, Tooke, Talleyrand, Erskine, Walter Scott, Lord Grenville, and the Duke of Wellington are the illustrious men, scraps of whose conversation are here placed on record. The volume contains much that is trivial, and things already well known, but there are also not a few deeply interesting personal memoranda. We select some of those relating to the Duke of Wellington.

Buonaparte, in my opinion, committed one of his greatest errors when he meddled with Spain; for the animosity of the people was unconquerable, and it was almost impossible to get us out of that corner. I have often said it would be his ruin; though I might not live to see it. A conqueror, like a cannon-ball, must go on. If he rebounds, his career is over.

Buonaparte was certainly as clever a man as ever lived, but he appears to me to have wanted sense on many occasions.

At one time I expected him there [in Spain] in person, and him by himself I should have regarded at least as an accession of 40,000 men.

Clausel was the best general employed against me there. He gave me a great deal of trouble; for every night he took a good position, and every morning I had to turn and dislodge him.

Once I thought I had him; but it pleased a young gentleman of ours to go and dine at a cabaret in the valley a mile or two off. Clausel's reconnoitring party fell in with him, and Clausel took the alarm and was gone. He was then a young man, and is now (1824) in disgrace and in America. If there was a war, we should hear of him again.

In Spain, and also in France, I used continually to go alone and reconnoitre almost up to their pickets. Seeing a single horseman in his cloak, they disregarded me as some subaltern. No French general, said Soult, would have gone without a guard of at least a thousand men.

The French were cruel to their guides. One, whom we found dead in the road, had conducted them within sight of the castle they were in search of; and no sooner had he pointed to it on the hill, than he received a bullet from a pistol at the back of his head. We found him an hour afterwards lying on his face where he fell, and learnt in a neighbouring village that he had been hired there. They wished to conceal their movements from us; but why not detain him for a day or two?

There was a spy in the habit of going from camp to camp. We called him Don Uran de la Rosa; and he

dined with us and the French alternately. "Who is he and what is he?" said Alava, when he saw him at table. "A Spaniard, an Andalusian," they replied.—"No Spaniard," said Alava; "he may be Cagliostro, or any body else, but no Spaniard." He was for ever talking, as Frenchmen are, and always at my elbow. He had just left the French, and he said to me, when I was reconnoitring, "Do you wish to see Marshal Soult?" "Certainly." "There he is, then!" I looked through my glass, and saw him distinctly—so distinctly as to know him instantly when I met him afterwards in Paris; as I did several times, though never to exchange ten words with him. He was sitting on his horse, and writing a despatch on his hat, while an aide-de-camp waited by him; to whom, when he had done, he delivered it, pointing with much earnestness in one direction again and again. "I see enough," I replied, and gave the glass to another, saying to him, "Observe which way that gentleman goes." He galloped off as directed, and I knew at once, as I thought, where the attack was to be made. "That is my weakest point," said I to myself; and I prepared accordingly. Of such use, as I had always maintained, are glasses.

Marmont throws the fault on others, but I think he was to blame at Salamanca; for he spread his army, thinking that we wished to make off; and with my whole force I made a sudden attack on his centre, in front and in rear. It was said, and said truly, that we defeated forty thousand men in forty minutes. He was, however, a very excellent officer.

In Spain I never marched the troops long. Twenty-five miles were the utmost. They set off, usually, at five or six in the morning, and took their ground by one. In India they could go further. Once in one day I marched them seventy-two miles. Starting at three in the morning, they went twenty-five miles, and halted at noon. Then I made them lie down to sleep, setting sentinels over them; and at eight they started again, marching till one at noon the next day; when we were in the enemy's camp. In Europe we cannot do so much. For in England we send them by a canal into the interior, and along the coast by a smack. In India they *must* walk.

I look upon it that all men require two pounds weight of food a day; the English not more than the French. Vegetable food is less convenient than animal food, the last walking with you.

The elastic woven corset would answer well over the cuirass. It saved me, I think, at Orthez, where I was hit on the hip. I was never struck but on that occasion, and there I was not wounded. I was on horseback again the same day.

Buonaparte I never saw; though, during the battle [Waterloo], we were once, I understood, within a quarter of a mile of each other. I regret it much; for he was a most extraordinary man. To me he seems to have been at his acmé at the Peace of Tilsit, and gradually to have declined afterwards.

He would have done better, I think, to have stood on the defensive. Six hundred thousand men would have gathered round him, and the jostling of so many would have been terrible. If he had waited for his moment, and attacked when and where he pleased from the centre, his success in one instance might have been fatal to the rest.

At Waterloo he had the finest army he ever commanded; and everything, up to the onset, must have turned out as he wished. Indeed, he could not have expected to beat the Prussians, as he did at Ligny, in four hours.

But two such armies as those at Waterloo, have seldom met, if I may judge from what they did on that day. It was a battle of giants! a battle of giants!

Many of my troops were new; but the new fight well, though they manoeuvre ill; better perhaps than many who have fought and bled.

As to the way in which some of our ensigns and lieutenants braved danger—the boys just come from school—it exceeds all belief. They ran as at cricket.

When all was over, Blucher and I met at La Maison

Rouge. It was midnight when he came : and riding up, he threw his arms round me, and kissed me on both cheeks as I sat in the saddle. I was then in pursuit; and, as his troops were fresh, I halted mine, and left the business to him.

We supped afterwards together between night and morning, in the spacious tent erected in the valley for that purpose. Pozzo di Borgo was there among others; and, at my request, he sent off a messenger with the news to Ghent, where Louis XVIII breakfasted every morning in a bow-window to the street, and where every morning the citizens assembled under it to gaze on him.

When the messenger, a Russian, entered the room with the news, the king embraced him; and all embraced him and one another, all over the house. An emissary of Rothschild was in the street; and no sooner did he see these demonstrations than he took wing for London. Not a syllable escaped from his lips at Bruges, at Ostend, or at Margate; nor, till Rothschild had taken his measures on the Stock Exchange, was the intelligence communicated to Lord Liverpool.

On that day I rode Copenhagen from four in the morning till twelve at night; and when I dismounted, he threw up his heels at me as he went off. If he fed, it was on the standing corn and as I sat in the saddle. He was a chestnut horse. I rode him hundreds of miles in Spain and at the battle of Toulouse. He died blind with age (28 years old) in 1835 at Strathfieldsaye, where he lies buried within a ring fence.

The story of the Peninsula and of Waterloo will never lose interest for English readers, and these sketches by the Duke himself are truly graphic and suggestive. Among the miscellaneous recollections are the following:—

I hear nothing by my left ear. The drum is broken, and might have been broken twenty years ago, for aught I know to the contrary. A gun discharged near me might have done it.

Strange impressions come now and then after a battle; and such came to me after the battle of Assaye in India. I slept in a farm yard; and whenever I awaked, it struck me that I had lost all my friends, so many had I lost in that battle. Again and again, as often as I awaked, did it disturb me. In the morning I inquired anxiously after one and another; nor was I convinced that they were living till I saw them.

Elephants are used always in war [in India] for conveyance of stores or artillery. I had once occasion to send my men through a river upon some. A drunken soldier fell off, and was carried down by the torrent till he scrambled up a rock in the middle of the stream. I sent the elephant after him, and with large strides he obeyed his driver. When arrived, he could not get near the rock, and he stiffened his tail to serve as a plank. The man was too drunk to avail himself of it, and the elephant seized him with his trunk, and notwithstanding the resistance he made, and the many cuffs he gave that sensitive part, placed him on his back.

Scott's Life of Napoleon is of no value. The tolerable part of it is what relates to his retreat from Moscow. I have thought much on that subject, and have made many inquiries concerning it. I gave him my papers. He has used some, not all.

Napier has great materials, and means well; but he is too much influenced by anything that makes for him, even by an assertion in a newspaper. I do not think much of Southey. "The Subaltern" is excellent, particularly in the American Expedition to New Orleans. He describes all he sees.

It has been said, in reference to this work of Scott, as contrasted with his fictions, that he wrote romances like history, and history like romances; but Francis Jeffrey declared that Scott had succeeded in accomplishing what he thought no human being

could do, to make the life of Napoleon uninteresting!

We conclude with a recollection of Wellington, most honourable to him as an upright and patriotic statesman. It was at the moment of Earl Grey's accession to office, on the Duke's resignation as premier in 1830:—

They want me to place myself at the head of a faction; but I say to them, "I have now served my country for forty years—for twenty I have commanded her armies, and for ten I have sat in the cabinet—and I will not now place myself at the head of a faction."

When I lay down my office to-morrow, I will go down into my county, and do what I can to restore order and peace. And in my place in parliament, when I can, I will approve; when I cannot, I will dissent; but I will never agree to be the leader of a faction.

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.

CONSIDER how, with all their glare and show, things Seen are paltry, passing, the least of things; and that grandeur and endurance belong to the Unseen. The soul is unseen; precious jewel of immortality, it lies concealed within its fragile fleshy casket. Hell and heaven are unseen; the first sinks beneath our sight, the second rises high above it. The eternal world is unseen; a veil impenetrable hangs before its mysteries, hiding them from the keenest eye. Death is unseen; he strikes his blow in the dark. The devil is unseen—stealing on us often unsuspected, and always invisible. And as is our deadliest foe, so is our best and truest, our heavenly Friend. Jesus is an invisible Saviour; Jehovah is an invisible God.

"No man hath seen God at any time;" yet why should that be turned into a temptation to sin? I think it should rather minister to constant watchfulness and holy care. How solemn the thought, that an invisible being is ever at our side, and watching us, recording with rapid pen each deed and word, every desire that rises, though it be to burst like an air-bell, every thought that passes, though on an eagle's wing. We cannot shake off the presence of God; and when doors are shut, and curtains drawn, and all is still, and darkest night fills our chamber, and we are left alone to the companionship of our thoughts, it might keep them pure and holy to say, as if we saw two shining eyes looking on us out of the darkness, "Thou, God, seest me." The world called him mad who imagined that he saw God's eye looking on him out of every star of the sky, and every flower of the earth, and every leaf of the forest, from the ground he trod upon, from the walls of his lonely chamber, and out of the gloomy depths of night. Mad! It was a blessed and holy fancy. May God help you to feel yourselves at all times more in his presence than you are at any time in that of your fellow-men! How promptly then would every bad thought be banished; what unholy deeds be crushed in the desire, nipped in the bud, strangled in the birth; what crimes remain uncommitted; how feeble would the strongest temptations prove; what a purity, nobility, loftiness, holiness, heavenliness, would be imparted to your whole bearing and conversation! There would be a dignity in the humblest Christian's mien and looks, such as rank never wore and courtly training never bred; and we should guard our hearts with such a door as stands at the threshold of heaven, this written above it in the blood of Calvary, Here "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth."—*Dr. Guthrie.*